

ADDRESS
OF
Gen'l Bradley T. Johnson
BEFORE
THE ASSOCIATION OF
CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
OF MARYLAND,

JUNE 10, 1874.

BALTIMORE:
KELLY, PIET & COMPANY,
174 W. Baltimore Street.
1874

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Richard Barksdale Harwell

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ORATION.

My fellow-countrywomen and countrymen:

Years press on years, and the rough traces of human strife on the bosom of nature and on the hearts of men are smoothed and softened until they mark only epochs of glorious endeavor or purifying trial, while the passion, and the blood, and the grief, pass away.

Nature teaches us the great lesson, and yearly spreads her green mantle over the wounds that she has healed, and strews the scars with flowers.

The sharp lines of the bastion are being rounded off, the fosse is being filled, and the breach where the bodies of the dying made the ladder for the living in the storming assault, are all now clad by the vernal turf, and the trumpet vine, and the violet, and the wild rose, strew garlands over every spot consecrated by patriotic effort and a patriot's blood.

We reverently following her teachings, assemble to emulate her in laying our tribute of affection on these graves. They are consecrated through all time as the resting places of the bodies of heroes and patriots who died in defence of their altar and of their native land.

The impressions made on the minds of men by great human struggles of force, is measured more by the principles they seek to maintain, and the fortitude and courage with which they are supported, than the number engaged, or the time they occupy, or by the success with which they are crowned.

The bees hummed drowsily over the thyme beds on the Thessalian Hills, and the shepherds unconscious, tended their flocks there, the very hour before Thermopylæ blazed out to serve through all time as an illustration of heroic, patriotic self-devotion. [Applause.]

Arnold von Winkelried's sheaf of spears in a moment transfixed his heart and elevated his name and fame, for the reverence of all patriots forever.

So, while tradition shall hand down the story, while records show the knightly endeavor, the soldierly bearing of the men,

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and the self-abnegation, the enthusiasm and the untiring zeal of the women of the South, all future generations of Americans will remember them with pride, and all feel honored in saying they were for our race and blood and lineage. [Applause.]

The time of bitterness will soon pass away. One generation even will advance far toward recognizing great historical truths, when those truths do honor to human nature. No great organization of human effort which has created anything ever was based on hatred and revenge.

All enduring movements have rested on belief in truth and honor and love of fellow-man. Passion may sway the hour; but reason and justice rules the centuries, and we rest therefore with implicit confidence in the justice of the decision which the supreme tribunal of history will eventually render in our favor. We claim that we supported in arms our rights of civil liberty and constitutional government; that we did so with fidelity and courage; that we have borne defeat and disaster with fortitude and dignity equal to our achievements in arms, and that our whole population, men, women, and the growing children, for thirteen years have never wavered in their fixed determination to secure, recover, and preserve their rights as freemen inherited from free ancestors.

We point to the long roll of illustrious soldiers, not five of whom have yielded to the terrors or blandishments of power to take sides against their former comrades. We refer to the entire womanhood of the South, in all civilized nations the nurse and protector of their honor and their morals. Without exception they have borne grief and suffering, trial and trouble, without a murmur, and with a constancy only equaled by that with which they supported the controversy of arms. [Applause.]

During all this period, with the wreck of fortune, with the utter destruction of society, with the extermination of families slain in battle, the deportment of our people has been such as to preserve their own-self-respect and thereby insure the respect of all the world. [Applause.]

I do not believe that we fought in any "lost cause." I denounce the phrase as unworthy of our people and their position. Our cause was that of every lover of liberty, in all time, the world over, the right of a people to govern themselves, and it never has been, never can be "lost." [Applause.] It was the cause of Leonidas and his three hundred; it was the cause of Brutus and Horatio; it was the cause of Tell and Winkelreid, of Sobieski and Kosciusko, of William of Or-

ange, and of George Washington, and of Robert E. Lee. [Continued applause.] Often it has gone down before overwhelming force in one generation and with one people. But told by historians, painted by artists, sung by poets, through all time, it constantly reappears, in the march of the human race, as the constant, self-perpetuating principle of progress and development and civilization, to those who have the love of liberty and the courage and the will to seek to enjoy it.

Our struggle for it in arms, seeking to defend the practice of State sovereignty, was only an incident. Because we lost our battle, liberty was not lost for us, nor for our children. The issue decided was the issue of separate National existence, and that was decided against us. To that decision we bow, and propose on fitting occasions to apply to others the law which was enforced against us. But in my opinion, and in that of many thoughtful men, if the issue of arms had not been made the separation of the States would have been but temporary, and would have resulted in a strengthened Union under an amended constitution.

But be that as it may, by our failure to establish National independence we are remitted to our duties as citizens of the Union. We have performed them faithfully and honestly, and we know that time will heal all wounds and give us such justice as is now claimed. It is not nine years since the war ended, and yet wonderful progress has been made toward an honorable and just reconciliation.

I believe it is true in all cases, that where a class is deprived of rights by civil war that class ought not to be too eager to resume them, but rather ought to leave to the prevailing side the decision as to the time and occasion of restoration. When such a proscribed part of the State presses itself forward into the exercise of the rights of citizenship, it always does so with suspicion and distrust, and therefore with weakened power. But when the side that prevailed convinced that justice and experience require the unsuccessful party to be called to participate in the burdens and honors of citizenship, of its own will invokes their co-operation, then the party invited comes forward with infinitely greater power and influence—power which is increased by the delay which has occurred in the invitation.

At least so it has been in various crises of English history. The restored government of Charles made the Parliamentary general a peer of the realm and conciliated the masses of the opposing party; and the Hanoverian succession sought to induce the Jacobite lords and squires to take office under it.

Such a policy as this would have been wisest here, and if it had been adopted in 1865 we would have been far on the way of genuine, honest and equal reconstruction. [Applause.]

Instead of excluding the born leaders of men from position, the wiser policy would have been to have urged and pressed them into the public service. With Louisiana represented by Beauregard, Texas by Hood, Georgia by Joe Johnston and Gordon, North Carolina by Ransom, South Carolina by Wade Hampton, in the Senate of the United States, the Union would have had a guarantee of fidelity to the laws, and a peaceful, prosperous society, that all reconstruction has not been able to secure; while with Robert E. Lee as one of the constitutional advisers of the President of the United States, embodying the plighted honor of every surviving Confederate soldier, and the assured faith of four millions of brave and honest people, this nation would have been spared the disgrace and disaster which have come on it from low and mistaken ideas of policy toward us. [Applause.]

Such a course was in serious contemplation. Shortly after the accession of Mr. Johnson to the Presidency he summoned Horace Greeley to Washington, to consult on the state of the country. Mr. Greeley—as he told me—attended, and suggested a plan for pacification which he urged the President to adopt. It was that the President should invite two Northern men and two Southern men to visit him at the Executive mansion as his guests, that they should mature a plan in constant consultation with the President for pacification, and Mr. Greeley said that he would promise to support such a plan as they might agree upon, they being the men he named, to wit, Robert E. Lee, of Virginia, and John A. Campbell, of Alabama, from the South, and two Northern statesmen whose names he mentioned.

This suggestion, though received with favor, was never acted on; that it should have been could hardly have been expected. It would have been wiser; but a democracy is passionate, hot-blooded and rash, and the American people are no exception to the rule, and at that time such sagacity and clear-sightedness would have been supernatural in such a society. But ideas circulate rapidly, and reason is fast resuming its sway, and we are enabled even now to have glimpses of the judgment which posterity will pass on our acts.

In the ordinary course of affairs, by the inexorable logic of events, the Supreme Court of the United States has been forced to decide that the Confederate flag was a lawful flag; that

the Sumter was not a pirate, and that Semmes' captures were made in a lawful war, and the Government of the United States has voluntarily based its claim of rights in the highest tribunals of Great Britain on the existence of the Confederate Government *de facto*. Long since it was admitted that the war was a civil war, and the failure to prosecute Mr. Davis was an admission to all time that participation in it was not treason.

We have already got so far that it is beginning to be understood that there was no rebellion nor any rebels, and I see shortly the conclusion about to be assented to by all that the war was one in which each citizen had the right to choose his side, and to the results of which the unsuccessful party was bound to submit in good heart and faith, the sole punishment being, not personal in penalties nor confiscations, but in the loss of life and destruction of property, the necessary consequence of such struggles.

The next movement in the crystallization of public opinion will be the general assent to the patriotism and courage and fidelity of all the men who fought, and while the warm affections will be reserved to those nearest, genuine respect will be given to those who fought against the respective sides. It will then be understood that the capitulation of Confederate troops was no unconditional surrender of conquered rebels, but was a compact made between soldiers as soldiers with arms in their hands, by which one side pledged their honor to obey the laws of the Union and to cease armed resistance, while the other made the equally solemn obligation that their former enemies were friends and would never be molested, disturbed, nor injured. We gave our parole and retained our swords.

The time, I say, is rapidly approaching when it will be understood that our pledge has been kept and that of the Federal soldiers broken, for every act of disfranchisement of a Confederate brother-in-arms wounds the honor of the former as much as it vainly seeks to disgrace the latter. Without exception, I believe the deportment of those soldiers who prevailed toward those who were unsuccessful has been faultlessly chivalric and respectful on all occasions, and everywhere they have been ready to assist and protect their former adversaries. They will, before long, appreciate the truth that this disfranchisement was a breach of the parole; and, therefore, an infraction of their plighted word, and they will see that the insult and the injury be repaired and atoned for.

Brave men never bear malice, and the sentiment of honor

implanted in the hearts of the Federal soldiers will sooner or later pervade and influence the opinions and acts of their countrymen. In the meantime our duty is plain. We shall do our part as citizens, maintain our right to our own sentiments, our own opinions, and our own traditions, and calmly and with dignity await the time when our full equality in public opinion as patriots and as soldiers is acknowledged and voluntarily accorded. When people have borne as much as we have; when they have lost what we have lost; when their very existence and name have been threatened with extermination, their surest, safest reliance is a profound and perfect conviction of the justice of their position and the truth of the cause in which they suffer.

Such a belief produces martyrs, but it never generates a corrupt or feeble race. Such is our position now. And wherever our people are suffering most, they are truest and bravest. In Charleston the unnamed horrors of race domination rest like a black pall over all prospects for the future, but in that midnight darkness the courage and the fidelity of her real people blaze like a beacon.

It is best it should be so. Such self-reliance is the surest safeguard against degradation. Dishonor comes from within. It cannot be inflicted from without. And this generation will see the day when the soldiers, and the widows and the orphans, of both sides, will stand as equals before the law of the whole country—equally honored, equally respected, and equally cared for. It will then be understood, that the vast mass of the men and women, North and South, who supported the war by their blood, by their prayers, their works and their substance, were alike impelled by the same high considerations of patriotism and love of liberty. [Applause.]

When that time comes, all hearts and all hands will unite in laying these tributes of sympathy and sentiment on the graves of those who charged at Gettysburg, crossed sabres at Aldie or Kellysville. And such a union will be honorable to the nation which creates it.

Here, in Maryland, we can do so now. Though her body was in the Union her heart and soul were with the South. [Applause.] And to the extent of her ability she aided the side to which her affections clung. Her young men marched in the armies of the Confederacy—others did equally dangerous and honorable duty at home, while the prayers of her women surrounded the cause with a pious halo.

She sent her sons South to fight that battle which she was

prevented from fighting under her own flag by her own organized forces, and to their hands she committed the standard of the old Commonwealth, blazoned with a new device, her admonition and her battle-cry—"Death before dishonor." They trod with not unequal steps to the path marked out by that old Maryland Line, whose posterity and heirs they were. Nearly every Maryland family which led in the first Revolution was represented by all of its arms-bearing youth. [Applause.]

Howard and Carroll, Johnson and Tilghman, Stone and Jenifer, Thomas and Dent, Snowden and Herbert and Williams, all were there, with many others, and either rode with Stuart or charged with Ashby, or marched under the Maryland colors, but wherever they fought or however they died their war-cry, the motto of the flag brought to them from the women of Baltimore by the queenliest of her daughters, was "Death before Dishonor." [Applause.] But other sons of the State, impelled by their sense of duty and controlled by their convictions of right, espoused the other side and maintained it with a directness, constancy, courage and fidelity of which one common mother feels proud, and which we also, equally her children, admire and respect. [Applause.] Where they served, they served truly and faithfully, when they fought they fought fairly and gallantly, and when they died they died as became the land which gave them birth.

First and the foremost among them all must be named the gallant command of a gallant soldier, the First Maryland Federal Regiment, Colonel John R. Kenly. It was my fortune, commanding the First Maryland Confederate Regiment, to meet our namesakes and fellow-countryman at Front Royal, in May, 1862. [A voice, "And we licked them, too," followed by laughter.] Although they were unsuccessful and we were victorious, the commanding officer and his subordinates from first to last behaved with such distinguished courage that we were proud to recognize them as sons of the same mother. [Applause.] I hope the time is at hand when she will treasure the flags that faced each other there, and the swords that flashed before the meeting lines in the Valley, around Richmond, and at Manassas, among the trophies of the State, as mementoes of the courage and devotion of all her sons. [Applause.]

This day, to some of us, throngs with many memories. It is the anniversary of the close of that brilliant episode of the great epic of the war—Jackson's Valley Campaign, equaled only by those illustrations of the genius of the greatest captain of history, as displayed from Monte Notte to Arcola.

From the 24th of May, when the first blow was struck at Front Royal, to the 9th of June, when the last shot was fired at Port Republic, Jackson had fought eight battles and actions; had defeated and driven back three armies, two of which were equal and one superior to his own in numbers; had captured five thousand prisoners with artillery, small arms, and wagons; had marched one hundred and fifty miles; had relieved the pressure on Richmond, and thus had destroyed the combinations of the General-in-Chief opposing General Lee.

In that campaign, in the language of Ewell's report, "The history of the First Maryland Regiment was the history of every battle from Front Royal to Cross Keys."

In moving on the enemy, it had always been the advance guard. In retreat it formed part of the rear guard, and as the conclusion of it a general order decorated it with the approbation of the Commanding General; and its colors, with a trophy, won in battle. But we paid in precious blood for the banners which we bore, and Front Royal, Winchester, Harrisonburg, and Cross Keys each received our tribute, and we laid beneath the daisies of the valley the cold hearts of our best and bravest.

Michael Stone Robertson, Capt. of Company I, had fallen charging in his place, with his face forward, in the leaden storm which struck down Ashby, "the bravest of the brave," and Nicholas Snowden, Lieutenant of Company D, whom you to-day buried here, with his dead comrades, lay by his side.

We here unite to-day in restoring them to the bosom of their mother State. But other graves call for our remembrance. Charles Winder, the brilliant and chivalrous, who gave his life at Cedar Run; Elzey, the type of the soldier, who, riding into battle at Manassas, said to me, "Now for a yellow sash or six feet of ground!" He won the sash, for Beauregard saluted him on the field as "the Blucher of the day," but the fierce fire of Coal Harbor carried him to his last resting place here. Ridgely Brown, Lieutenant Colonel of the First Cavalry, the sole sacrifice of a long day's fight, against overwhelming odds, at the South Anna; Murray, the darling of his comrades, as he was the mirror of gentle chivalry, who fell in that fierce charge at Gettysburg; Hodges, the pure, high-spirited boy who died in the lines of Richmond. Where shall I end this illustrious roll? Let us strew the blossoms of our hearts on all their graves, marking every battlefield from Manassas to Appomattox. [Applause.]

To the last resting places of our dead we give flowers; to their memory we erect monuments, but the hearts of future

generations inheriting the sentiments of this day will glow with pride at the column which respect and affection will construct out of the achievements of the Maryland Line. All the patriotism of its muster rolls will contribute to elevate and glorify it. [Applause.]

The Grand rush of the First Regiment at Harrisonburg, avenging the death of Ashby, and its manual of arms in front of the hostile batteries at Gaines' Mills; the charge of the Second Regiment at Gettysburg, and its recovery of the lines at Coal Harbor with the bayonet, when Lee decorated it as "the gallant battalion," the unparalleled feat of the First Cavalry when, dismounted, they stormed the block-house at Greenland Gap with revolvers alone; the achievement of the First Artillery in charging infantry at Cedar Run; the defence of the lines at Petersburg by the Second Artillery, when they fired the last shot before Richmond; Company K carrying off dying Stuart at Yellow Tavern, and that exploit of the Baltimore Light Artillery, when at Old Town they dismantled two guns, exploded a locomotive, and silenced a battery with three shots, thus cutting a way through for the whole command, which was nearly surrounded—all these and many more will be the storied deeds out of which the imperishable monument will be erected. Poetry and romance, painting and sculpture, will illustrate and decorate it; and I pray that it will stand through all time, enshrined in the hearts of the children of the Land of the Sanctuary. [Enthusiastic applause.]

The oration of General Johnson was received with marked favor, and he was cordially congratulated at its close by his friends and old comrades, who sat near him. One of his old soldiers, Lieutenant Richard Gilmor, came forward and decorated him with a beautiful crimson japonica.

